

30 easy-to-use science based valuable tips to help improve memory for people over 50











Welcome...

Memory is one of our most precious assets. From the moment we're born, It defines who we are. As we age, life becomes increasingly demanding, and everyone experiences forgetfulness. The question is, are the memory issues an expected progression, or are they affecting your life? Now we all agree occasional memory lapses can be very frustrating, but having a poor memory can be debilitating.

In many ways, our memories shape who we are. They make up our internal biographies the stories we tell ourselves about what we've done with our lives. They tell us who we're connected to, who we've touched during our lives, and who has touched us. In short, our memories are crucial to the essence of who we are as human beings.

That means age-related memory loss can represent a loss of self. It also affects the practical side of life, like getting around the neighborhood or remembering how to contact a loved one. It's not surprising, then, that concerns about declining thinking and memory skills rank among the top fears people have as they age.

To understand memory, we all have first to understand genetics can be a significant factor in memory loss, especially with medical issues such as Alzheimer's. The excellent news is medical and behavioral scientists have conclusively demonstrated that the way you live your life can help improve your memory.

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Here are 30 heavily researched methods, techniques, and easy-to-follow suggestions that can help Magnify Your Memory.

If you're experiencing changes in your memory, now is the time to do something!

1. Sugar Is Delicious, But It's Sour To Your Memory

Consuming too much-added sugar has been linked to many health issues and chronic diseases, including cognitive decline. Research has demonstrated that a diet heavy in sugar can lead to decreased memory functions and reduced brain volume, particularly in the area of the brain that stores short-term memory. For example, one study of more than 4,000 people found that those with a higher intake of sugary beverages like soda had lower total brain volumes and more flawed memories on average compared to people who consumed less sugar. Reducing sugar helps not only your memory but also improves your overall health.

2. Go Fishing

Fish oil is rich in the omega-3 fatty acids eicosatetraenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). These fats are essential for overall health and have been shown to lower the risk of heart disease, reduce inflammation, relieve stress and anxiety, and slow mental decline. Many studies have shown that consuming fish and fish oil supplements may improve memory, especially in older people. One study of 36 older adults with mild cognitive impairment found that short-term and working memory scores improved significantly after taking concentrated fish oil supplements for 12 months. Another recent review of 28 studies reported that when adults with mild symptoms of memory loss took supplements rich in DHA and EPA, like fish oil, they experienced improved episodic memory. Both DHA and EPA are vital to the health and functioning of the brain. They also help reduce inflammation in the body, which has been linked to cognitive decline.

3. Memory Meditation

The practice of meditation may positively affect your health in many ways. It is relaxing and soothing and has been found to reduce stress and pain, lower blood pressure and even improve memory. Meditation has been shown to increase gray matter in the brain. Gray matter contains neuron cell bodies. As you age, gray matter declines, which negatively impacts memory and cognition. Meditation and relaxation techniques have been shown to improve short-term memory in people of all ages, from people in their 20s to the elderly.





4. Your Ideal Weight

Maintaining healthy body weight is essential for well-being and is one of the best ways to keep your body and mind in top condition. Several studies have established obesity as a risk factor for cognitive decline. Interestingly, being obese can cause changes to memory-associated genes in the brain, negatively affecting memory. Obesity can also lead to insulin resistance and inflammation, both of which can negatively impact the brain. A study of 50 people between the ages of 18 and 35 found that a higher body mass index was associated with significantly worse memory test performance.

5. Get Enough Sleep

Lack of proper sleep has been associated with a poor memory for quite some time. Sleep plays an important role in memory consolidation, a process in which short-term memories are strengthened and transformed into long-lasting memories. Research shows that if you are sleep deprived, you could be negatively impacting your memory.

6. Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a mental state in which you focus on your present situation, maintaining awareness of your surroundings and feelings. Mindfulness is used in meditation, but the two aren't the same. Meditation is a more formal practice, whereas mindfulness is a mental habit you can use in any situation. Studies have shown that mindfulness is effective at lowering stress and improving concentration and memory. Mindfulness has also been linked with a lower risk of age-related cognitive decline and an overall improvement in psychological well-being. Incorporate mindfulness techniques into your daily routine. Pay more attention to your present situation, concentrating on your breathing and gently resetting your attention when your mind wanders.

7. Drink Less Alcohol

Consuming too many alcoholic beverages can be detrimental to your health in many ways and can negatively impact your memory. Binge drinking is a pattern of drinking that raises your blood alcohol levels to 0.08 grams per ml or above. Studies have shown it alters the brain and results in memory deficits. A study of 155 college freshmen found that students who consumed six or more drinks within a short period of time, either weekly or monthly, had difficulties in immediate and delayed memory-recall tests compared to students who never binge drank alcohol. Repeated episodes of binge drinking can damage the hippocampus, a part of the brain that plays a vital role in memory. While having a drink or two now and then is perfectly healthy, avoiding excessive alcohol intake is a smart way to protect your memory.





8. Train Your Brain

Exercising your cognitive skills by playing brain games is a fun and effective way to boost your memory. Crosswords, word-recall games, Tetris, and even mobile apps dedicated to memory training are excellent ways to strengthen memory. A study that included 42 adults with mild cognitive impairment found that playing games on a brain-training app for eight hours over four weeks improved memory test performance. Another study of 4,715 people showed that when they did 15 minutes of an online brain-training program at least five days a week, their short-term memory, working memory, concentration, and problem-solving improved significantly compared to a control group. Plus, brain-training games have been shown to help reduce the risk of dementia in older adults.

9. Cut Down On Refined Carbs

Consuming large amounts of refined carbohydrates like cakes, cereal, cookies, white rice, and white bread may damage your memory. These foods have a high glycemic index, meaning the body digests these carbohydrates quickly, leading to a spike in blood sugar levels. Studies have shown that the Western diet, which is high in refined carbohydrates, is associated with dementia, cognitive decline, and reduced cognitive function.

10. Get Your Vitamin D Levels Tested

Vitamin D is an important nutrient that plays many vital roles in the body. Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to a host of health issues, including reducing cognitive function. A study that followed 318 older adults for five years found that those who had blood levels of vitamin D less than 20 nanograms per ml lost their memory and other cognitive abilities faster than those with normal vitamin D levels. Low levels of vitamin D have also been linked to a greater risk of developing dementia.

11. Exercise More

Exercise is important for overall physical and mental health. Research has established that it's beneficial for the brain and may help improve memory in people of all ages, from children to older adults. For example, a study of 144 people aged 19 to 93 showed that a single bout of 15 minutes of moderate exercise on a stationary bike led to improved cognitive performance, including memory, across all ages. Many studies have shown exercise may increase the secretion of neuroprotective proteins and improve the growth and development of neurons, leading to improved brain health. Regular exercise in midlife is also associated with a decreased risk of developing dementia later in life.







12. Choose Anti-Inflammatory Foods

Consuming a diet rich in anti-inflammatory foods may help improve your memory. Antioxidants help lower inflammation in the body by reducing oxidative stress caused by free radicals. You can consume antioxidants in foods like fruits, vegetables, and teas. A recent review of nine studies with more than 31,000 people found that those who ate more fruits and vegetables had lower risks of cognitive decline and dementia compared to those who consumed less of these nutritious foods. Berries are particularly high in antioxidants like flavonoids and anthocyanins. Eating them may be an excellent way to prevent memory loss.

One study of more than 16,000 women demonstrated that those who consumed the most blueberries and strawberries had slower rates of cognitive decline and memory loss than women who ate fewer berries.

13. Add Some Cocoa To Your Diet

Cocoa is not only delicious but also nutritious, providing a powerful dose of antioxidants called flavonoids. Research suggests flavonoids are particularly beneficial to the brain. They may help stimulate the growth of blood vessels and neurons and increase blood flow in parts of the brain involved with memory. A study of 30 healthy people found that those who consumed dark chocolate containing 720 mg of cocoa flavonoids demonstrated better memory compared to those who consumed white chocolate without cocoa flavonoids. To get the most benefit out of chocolate, choose dark chocolate with a cocoa content of 70% cacao or higher. That will help ensure it contains larger amounts of antioxidants like flavonoids.

14. Easy Memory Helpers

Keep your keys, phone, and eyeglasses in the same place every day. Pay closer attention when you need to remember details. Do one thing at a time; multitasking increases forgetfulness. Repeat names of new acquaintances, silently or aloud. Link a person's name to a rhyme or vivid mental image. Repeat important facts back to people as you talk to them. Eliminate distractions when you're trying to learn something. Read instructions more than once on different occasions.





15. Cue Your Memory

To reactivate an old memory, you must think about your senses engaged as your memory was being recorded. That's because, as you experience something special or important, your perceptions — images, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, thoughts, or feelings — were being stored in one part of the brain (the cortex) and then bound together as a memory by another part of the brain (the hippocampus) and tagged so the frontal lobes could retrieve the pattern of information later. A cue from your environment (such as hearing a song) or a cue that you generate (such as thinking about your high school graduation) can help you retrieve a memory.

"The more specific the cues are for the episodes of life you're trying to remember, the more likely it is you'll have a pattern match and pull up an old memory," Dr. Budson says.

Ideas for cues

- Look at old photographs of your home, family, or friends.
- Read a poem you wrote or liked to read when you were younger.
- Hold an old article of clothing you saved.
- Read an old letter, personal journal, or newspaper article.
- Listen to an old song that you or someone in your family loved.
- Cook a meal your mom or dad used to make for you.
- Smell something that may jog your memory, like a book, pillow, perfume, or food.
- Visit a place from your younger days.
- Watch an old movie or TV show.







16. Dealing With Absent-Mindedness

Absent-Mindedness happens when you multitask and don't concentrate on less critical tasks. (Think of the stereotypical absent-minded professor who can recall complex formulas but keeps misplacing his glasses.) Sometimes, the seemingly small details can have significant consequences, like forgetting to take medicine or leaving the house without your phone. What you can do: When faced with multiple tasks, put them in order of importance and then focus on only one task at a time before moving on to the next. Setting up routines and reminders also can help prevent absent-mindedness. For example, create a memory table by your front door or in the bedroom where you place all your vital objects, like your phone, medicines, and glasses. Make sure you take your medication on schedule, use a pillbox labeled with dates and times, or set alarms on your smartphone to remind you.

Blocking is referred to as the "tip of the tongue" phenomenon when you can't recall a name or specific detail. "You know the information, but you can't immediately place a label on it," says Cho. "This happens to everyone at times, no matter a person's age, and isn't cause for concern unless it becomes a more frequent occurrence." What you can do: Recalling the names of people is the most common type of blocking. Cho suggests trying to associate a person with something that may help trigger name recall, like his or her hobby, work, background, or spouse. "Many times, you know more detail about a person beyond his or her name," she says. Another option is associating the person with someone who has the same name or a similar one, like a relative, celebrity, or movie character. "You can also connect the name with a rhyming word or song," says Cho. For large functions where you know the attendees, like family gatherings or meetings, rehearse people's names beforehand.

Transience is the loss of certain memories — **typically facts or events** — **over time.** "The brain decides what information becomes less crucial or integral," says Cho. For instance, you can memorize a phone number to use immediately, but then you don't retain it because it's no longer needed. What you can do: If you want to retain certain memories, try to keep that information emotionally charged. "If you believe it's important, your brain will likely hang on to it longer," she says. You can do this by revisiting the memory through sharing it in conversation, recording it for future reference, and reviewing photographs.

Misattribution is when you recall accurate information from an event but can't attribute it to the correct source, or you recognize a familiar face but place the person wrongly. Another type of is misattribution is false recognition, which scammers often exploit. "People try to convince you that you owe money, and you don't trust your memory and second-guess yourself," says Cho. What you can do: If you have trouble connecting information with a source, write down the details of an event when they occur. You can also record the information (most smartphones have voice memo capabilities) or take pictures or videos.

"But keep in mind that many times what you know is more important than where it came from, so focus on that," says Cho.





17. Music To Your Brain

Listening to music or playing an instrument engages multiple parts of your brain — and can help your mood and memory. Music has the ability to soothe, energize, and even improve your memory. And tapping into its power is as simple as turning on your radio.

Whether your choice is jazz, classical, rock 'n' roll, or hip-hop, music has unique effects on the brain, says Dr. Andrew Budson, a neurology lecturer at Harvard Medical School and chief of cognitive and behavioral neurology at the VA Boston Healthcare System. And you can reap benefits whether you are playing a musical instrument or just kicking back and listening to some tunes.

18. Check your hearing aids

Don't wait to get hearing aids if you need them. They can improve your quality of life. Hearing aids may be a symbol of advancing age, but they also can be your means to a healthier and more vibrant life. Research continues to show that people with age-related hearing loss who get fitted for hearing aids tend to become more active. Some science has even suggested they have fewer cognitive issues.

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19. Rehiring Your Business Mind

It's important to sharpen work-related soft skills and improve your memory. Think back to how your mind operated during your work career. Your mental skills were divided into two types: hard and soft. Hard skills related to the technical knowledge you needed to perform a specific job. Soft skills consisted of everyday thinking, like making decisions, being a good listener, and having a positive attitude. You might not need hard skills as much now, but maintaining soft skills will always be valuable.

"Soft skills are essential to continue practicing and developing as you age. They help with so many everyday mental activities, like how you interact with people, perform simple tasks, follow directions, and solve problems," says Dr. Joel Salinas, a neurologist who specializes in behavioral neurology and neuropsychiatry at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital.

One way to improve soft skills is to strengthen the weaker parts of your soft skills and in the process improve your everyday memory," says Dr. Salinas.

Here's a look at these practices, along with strategies for incorporating them into your daily life. Mindfulness is being actively aware and giving focused attention to what you do while you do it. You can improve mindfulness through active listening. When you listen fully to people's words and voices, you keep your brain in the present, helping it gather and retain information. This skill comes in handy during important conversations, like when you hear advice from your doctor or are given directions.

Here is how to practice active listening: Focus on eye contact. When you look at someone as he or she speaks, you stay connected, which can increase your concentration. The action also gives you a central focus to keep your mind from wandering. Block any potential distractions, like your phone or reading materials. Don't interrupt. Let people finish speaking before you respond. If you focus only on what you want to say, you won't be fully listening.

"Instead, focus on what they're trying to convey and build off of it by summarizing what you think they just said before moving onto a new thought," says Salinas.

Lack of confidence can have a profound effect on your thinking skills. For instance, studies show that older adults often do worse on memory tests after they're exposed to negative stereotypes and criticism about aging. "You can offset our common tendency to speak negatively, critically, or disrespectfully to ourselves by talking to yourself as you would talk to someone you care about with deep tenderness, like a grandchild or a loving pet," says Salinas.

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19. Rehiring Your Business Mind (continued)

Reciting positive mantras is one way to do this. This type of mantra is a motivating and inspirational message that reminds you of your many capabilities.

Make a list of your favorite messages. Keep them short and simple so they are easy to remember. When you need a quick confidence boost, repeat a mantra in your head, or read it aloud.

Another option is to write mantras on sticky notes and place them where you can see them every day, like on the bathroom mirror, refrigerator, and computer screen.

20. Walk Backwards

Can you boost your memory by walking backward? A study shows that moving in reverse may help with short-term memory. A study published in the January issue of Cognition found that people who walked backward, imagined they were walking backward, or even watched a video simulating backward motion had better recall of past events than those who walked forward or sat still.

21. The Buzz About Caffeine And Health

Caffeine in coffee might offer not just a momentary mental boost but also longer-term effects on thinking skills. The caffeine-brain connection, the reason you get a quick wake-up call after chugging a mug of coffee, has to do with the way caffeine tricks your brain. Not only is caffeine a brain stimulant, but it also blocks receptors for a chemical called adenosine, which normally prevents the release of excitatory brain chemicals. With adenosine out of the way, these brain-sparking chemicals can flow more freely, giving you a surge of energy and potentially improving mental performance and slowing age-related mental decline.







22. Eat More Fruit And Vegetables

According to a study published online Nov. 21, 2018, by Neurology, doing so might lower your risk of memory loss.

The study looked at almost 28,000 men, average age 51, who filled out questionnaires every four years for 20 years about how many servings of fruits, vegetables, and other foods they ate each day. The participants also took tests of their thinking and memory skills at least four years before the end of the study, when the average age was 73. The researchers found that men who consumed the most daily servings of vegetables and fruit (six or more servings) were less likely to develop poor thinking skills than those who consumed the fewest (about two daily servings or less). A fruit serving was defined as a cup of whole fruit or half a cup of fruit juice. A serving of vegetables was a cup of raw vegetables or two cups of leafy greens.

Scientists speculated that the antioxidants and bioactive substances — such as vitamins A, B, C, and E; carotenoids; flavonoids; and polyphenols — found in fruit and vegetables might reduce brain oxidative stress, which in effect may prevent age-related brain dysfunction like memory loss.

23. Pets Can Help

"There's a reason dogs are called our best friends: not only do they offer unparalleled companionship, but a growing body of research shows they also boost our health," says Dr. Elizabeth Pegg Frates, clinical assistant professor at Harvard Medical School and medical editor of the Harvard Special Health Report Get Healthy, Get a Dog (www.health.harvard.edu/DOG).

In a 2011 Italian study of women in their 80s, those who spent 90 minutes a week stroking, grooming, walking or playing with a dog scored significantly higher on mental tests than they did before they were introduced to the dogs. They also scored higher than a control group of similar women who had no canine interaction. If you don't want a live-in canine companion, consider volunteering at an animal shelter.





24. Reading Books May Add Years To Your Life

We all know that books can enrich our lives, but do they have health benefits as well? And if so, does reading books have greater health advantages than reading newspapers or magazines?

Researchers at Yale University School of Public Health designed a study to try to answer those questions. The researchers studied the records of 5,635 participants in the Health and Retirement Study, an ongoing investigation of people who were 50 or older and had provided information on their reading habits when the study began.

They determined that people who read books regularly had a 20% lower risk of dying over the next 12 years compared with people who weren't readers or who read periodicals. This difference remained regardless of race, education, state of health, wealth, marital status, and depression. These findings, which were published in the September 2016 issue of Social Science & Medicine, suggest that the benefits of reading books may include a longer life in which to read them.

25. Need A Quick Memory Boost

Take a walk. A brief bout of aerobic exercise can help if you need to stay focused on a task and solve problems more efficiently. It's not news that exercise is good for your body. You can probably recite the litany of physical benefits from regular activity:

Exercise helps control your weight, lowers your blood pressure, and dampens inflammation. It reduces the risk of having a heart attack or stroke or of developing diabetes or certain cancers.

But exercise is just as important for your mind. Not only is regular exercise associated with a reduced risk of depression and anxiety, but there is also mounting evidence that it slows cognitive decline and may reduce the risk of dementia.

"There is good evidence that exercise behaves like medicine to improve brain health and thinking skills. There is a growing body of science behind this," says Dr. Scott McGinnis, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.







26. Memory Joggers

You know when a name or date is right at the tip of your tongue, but you can't remember it? Here are a few strategies to help you store—and retrieve—new information.

Say it aloud. The act of repeating a name or word will help you store it away for later. When you meet someone for the first time, say, "Great to meet you, Sue!" When someone gives you directions, repeat them back, step by step. And when you put your keys away, say out loud, "I put my keys on the hall table." After you have an important conversation—for example, with your doctor—on the ride home, recite out loud what was said during the appointment.

Make associations. Mentally connect an unfamiliar word with a word where you're better acquainted. For example, if you meet someone named April, think of her as the month of April—trees in full spring bloom. That image will be easier to recall the next time you see her.

Remind yourself. Write notes and leave them where you need them—for example, post a sticky note on your bathroom mirror to remind you to take your medicine each morning. You can also use the alarm on your cellphone or have a friend call you.

Break down tasks. If you know that you won't be able to remember an entire sequence of steps needed to complete a task, break down that task into smaller chunks and tackle one at a time. Breaking down large sections of text or numbers you need to memorize into smaller bits (memorizing the first three numbers of a phone number, then the next three, then the last four) also aids in better recall.

Finally, don't underestimate the power of social interaction. Research finds that staying connected to friends and relatives provides mental stimulation, which translates into better memory.

27. Reduce Stress And Anxiety

For older adults, disturbances in mood are among the most common causes of memory problems. The cause of the problem could be an illness in the family—or something with more positive overtones, like moving to a new home. In either case, the new life stressor can make it harder for you to keep on top of things. Stress and anxiety affect memory because they make it harder for you to concentrate and lock new information and skills into memory. You may end up forgetting something simply because you were not really paying attention or had too much on your mind. The symptoms of depression often include forgetfulness. Most people think of depression as a stifling sadness, lack of drive, and less pleasure in things you ordinarily enjoy. But the signs can change with aging. The lack of restful, high-quality sleep is perhaps the greatest unappreciated cause of memory slips. Sleeplessness can become more of an issue with aging.

"Older adults spend less time in the deep stages of sleep, which are the most restful," Dr. Fabiny says. "As a result, they may not feel as rested upon awakening in the morning because they haven't slept well."





28. Healthy: No Strain, No Gain

To keep your mental skills and memory in tip-top shape, take on new challenges, get out of your comfort zone, and be social. Use it or lose it: How many times have you heard that timeworn principle of healthy brain aging? Scientists say that living a mentally active life is as important as regular physical exercise. Just as your muscles grow stronger with use, mental exercise keeps your mental skills and memory in tone. Any brain exercise is better than being a total mental couch potato. But the activities with the most impact are those that require you to work beyond what is easy and comfortable—just as in physical weightlifting.

Playing endless rounds of solitaire and watching the latest documentary marathon on the History Channel may not be enough. "If it's too easy," Dr. Fabiny says, "it's not helping you."

29. Be A Lifelong Learner

You spent the first half of your life building what brain scientists call "cognitive reserve." That equates with dense networks of connections between brain cells. Experience and learning build and maintain the connectivity. "Learning new things is really important because you are using mental skills that you would not otherwise,"

Dr. Fabiny says. "When you are actually learning something, you are creating new neural pathways. That's hugely important."

As you get older, you want to keep what you have and maintain your neural networks in the best working order. Strain your brain. Scientists have found that a wide variety of mental activities seem to help preserve our cognitive reserve—from playing board games to juggling. The more challenging tasks can have the most impact. Think of all "mental activities" as a continuum from watching a TV documentary (passive; mildly challenging) to taking a class to learn how to converse in a new language (active; very challenging). Taking on a challenge like acquiring new language skills can be very difficult, but the benefits are greater, too. "Don't just go to the library and learn new things that way," Dr. Fabiny says. "Be open to new experiences that cause you to see the world and do things differently."

30.

. Be Social, You'll Love It

While cocooned in our comfort zones, we run the risk of avoiding unfamiliar people as well as circumstances. The resulting social isolation, aging researchers have discovered, puts people at risk for mental decline. "By isolating socially and mentally, you can lose the reserve you have," Dr. Fabiny says. "If you are not using those neural networks, they'll just go away."

Here's one antidote: seek a volunteer position that's a good fit with your skills and abilities yet allows you to have contact with a variety of people and puts you in new settings and situations.





Sources:

Healthline: 14 ways to improve your memory

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